

STATEMENT FROM THE EGREMONT PLANNING BOARD
DELIVERED AT THE STATE LISTENING SESSION ON
WIND TOWER SITINGS ON STATE LAND
June 24, 2009 at Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, MA

The Planning Board of Egremont wishes me to register its opposition to the Wind Energy Siting Reform Act as it now stands. Many of their comments apply also to the siting of wind towers on state land. We support the objections of others that there is at this point a lack of planning and standards for the use of state or private land for wind turbine siting. We are asked to sign a blank check if we are to support this wind tower siting reform legislation or the use of state lands without any further information and guidelines as to where such turbines will be located and how the environmental impact will be mitigated. The state is saying in essence "Trust me".

"Trust me" was the motto spoken to the Egremont Planning Board once before, in 1986 when 600 homes were originally proposed for land that is now the Jug End State Reservation and Wildlife Management Area. That land was in private hands then, and the Planning Board worked diligently to prevent that very special land from being overdeveloped and inappropriately used. With the help of caring environmental groups, the state swept in to save the day and protect the property from inappropriate use.

Now the state itself is considering use which is not consistent with policies which caused that land to be protected. The same is true for other state lands. The state is saying "Trust me". We are not being told whether that land can be both locally protected and used to enhance global environmental protection through alternative energy production. We need to know how that can take place before we can speak in support of wind energy on state lands.

These are two environmental issues which are splitting environmentalists. The query is 'How do we protect our local environment while enhancing protection of our global environment?'. The answer is to do some specific balanced planning and not to move forward with the majority of control in the hands of the executive branch of our government which has openly expressed strong support for wind generation. With our energy and our environmental government officials wearing dual hats, that balance can only come from an open planning process which gives the citizens the opportunity for review of development standards before legislation becomes law.

A look at the mapping of potential wind sites shows the fundamental unfairness of not holding a Public Hearing on the proposed legislation in the western part of Massachusetts. The great majority of wind sites are in our end of the state, and we should have the opportunity to be involved in the legislation which has the potential to so greatly impact our homes and local environment.

Give us a chance to speak on the legislation; don't just take a "Trust me" approach with most of our eggs in the Executive Branch basket.

We are all concerned about the environment. This process to date seems to be pitting us against each other rather than promoting planning toward common goals. Let's fix that.

Thank you.